

# LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOARD (IRELAND).

Circular, dated 31st March, 1919, respecting  
Financial Assistance to Local Authorities in  
connection with the provision of Houses for  
the Working Classes.

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Presented to Parliament by Command of His Majesty.

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOARD, DUBLIN,  
31st March, 1919.

No. 49M/1919.  
Miscellaneous.

SIR,

1. I am directed by the Local Government Board for Ireland to inform you that His Majesty's Government have considered the terms of financial assistance that should be given to local authorities in connection with the provision of houses for the working classes in urban districts and towns in Ireland at the present time. The Government are desirous of securing the rapid erection of the number of houses needed to make good the existing shortage, and they believe that under the terms now proposed they will be able to rely upon the active and energetic co-operation of the local authorities as a whole.

2. The housing schemes of local authorities to which the State will be prepared to grant financial assistance, if they are submitted in complete form to the Local Government Board before the 15th April, 1920, and carried out within a period of two years from the date of the Board's sanction, or within such further period as may be approved by the Board, are :—

- (a) Schemes under Part III. of the Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1890, for any area for which the Board are satisfied that it is desirable that houses for the working classes should be provided.
- (b) Re-housing schemes in connection with improvement and reconstruction schemes under Parts I. and II. of the Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1890, except that no part of the cost of acquiring and clearing a site would be made the subject of financial assistance if either (1) the site had been acquired or cleared before the date of this letter, or (2) the needs of the district could, in the opinion of the Board, be adequately met by means of a scheme under Part III.

3. The full cost of a scheme will, in the first instance, be met out of a loan or loans raised by the local authority and, while the Treasury are prepared to make loans from the Local Loans Fund where this is necessary, it is essential, having regard to the heavy claims on that Fund, that wherever possible, and in particular in the case of large authorities, loans should be raised by the authorities themselves in the open market. As the financial assistance to be granted from public funds for housing schemes will take the form of a subsidy, as explained, below, and as it is important to secure that the whole of the State assistance may be given under one head, any loans granted from the Local Loans Fund for the purpose of assisted schemes will not be made at the preferential rates ordinarily allowed for housing loans, but at a rate fixed by the Treasury so as to correspond with the full current market rate of interest.

4. In respect of any approved housing scheme, or series of schemes, carried out by a local authority within the period mentioned, Parliament will be asked to vote financial assistance calculated on a basis estimated to relieve the local authority of any loss incurred within a maximum of one pound for one pound of the rent actually collected each year from the occupiers of the houses, as certified by the Local Government Board Auditor. The amount of the subsidy will be reconsidered at the end of seven years, when it will be open to the Local Government Board to reduce it if they consider that there is evidence that the Local Authority has not exercised due economy in management and in not securing the best rents obtainable.

Pending the completion and letting of the houses, the subsidy from the State will be equal to the interest on the first and subsequent instalments of the Loan for a maximum period of one year from the signing of the contracts for the erection of the houses.

It must, however, be borne in mind that schemes subsidised in these ways will not be entitled to participate in the distribution of the Housing Fund provided by the Housing of the Working Classes (Ireland) Act, 1908.

5. The Local Government Board rely upon the local authorities to exercise the utmost economy in the making of contracts, the selection of land, and the cost of management, as if by reason of any failure to observe these conditions the cost of the houses involved a rent which, even with the subsidy, would place them beyond the rent-paying powers of the working classes for whom they are intended, and would result in their being occupied by more comfortably-circumstanced people, the Board would be obliged to consider the propriety of reducing the subsidy, or withdrawing it altogether.

6. The Board, with the approval of the Treasury, have requested the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland to conduct an architectural competition under conditions calculated to secure designs for suitable and economical types of houses grouped in the most advantageous manner on typical sites, and copies of the premiated designs will be available for the guidance of local authorities after the awards of the assessors have been made.

7. Legislation will shortly be introduced to give the necessary statutory powers to local authorities which may be required in regard to the provision of houses for the working classes, to enable local authorities under the Housing Acts to assist Public Utility Societies to provide houses for the very poor, to deal with bye-laws and local Act provisions which may be found to impede desirable housing proposals, and generally to facilitate the execution of schemes.

8. In view of the pressing urgency of the housing situation, the preparation of their schemes by the local authorities should not be postponed until the introduction of the proposed legislation. Having regard to the terms of the financial assistance now offered, the arrangements which are being made for the provision of materials and the supply of labour which is becoming available owing to the cancellation of war contracts and the demobilisation of the Forces, there should be no reason for any delay. The Government are looking to the local authorities to start at once upon the housing schemes which are regarded as forming one of the most urgent and essential parts of the whole programme of reconstruction.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

A. R. BARLAS,

*Secretary.*

To

The Town Clerk of each County Borough.

The Clerk of each Urban District Council.

The Clerk to the Town Commissioners.